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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: MIDDLE EAST

#### MIDDLE EAST

##### 1. "Blowing apart Mideast hope"

The liberal Toronto Star opined (8/26): "Millions of Israelis and Palestinians feel betrayed today, as the Middle East lurches back into chaos after a brief respite. Most endorse the American-brokered 'road map' to peace. Yet they've just seen their leaders fritter away a precious two-month truce. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, furious at being sidelined by the Americans and Israelis, never did give Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas the backing he needs to suppress extremists. Instead, Arafat undermined him.... Last week's horrific bus bombing in Jerusalem by Hamas, in which 21 Israelis died, was one of the most vicious attacks yet. But Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, too, has failed to live up to the spirit of the road map.... And Sharon's policy of hunting down and killing Hamas and Jihad leaders has spurred new attacks.... The violence of the past week should inspire Bush to get more actively involved, if only to salvage his own flagging credibility. This post 9/11, terror-fighting president has broad interests in Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan and elsewhere. He has to be seen to be even-handed, as he tries to end three years of violence in which 2,300 Palestinians and 840 Israelis have died. Yet he is being thwarted by regional actors who can't bring themselves to take the first steps. Bush must step up pressure on Arafat and Abbas to crack down hard on terror, so that Israelis can safely ride buses again. But he must also press Sharon to speedily quit the occupied areas so that the road map's pledge of a Palestinian state by 2005 looks like more than wishful thinking. The Palestinian and Israeli leaders must be prodded to places where they would not willingly go, left to their own blinkered vision. America's credibility rides on it. So do the hopes of millions."

##### 2. "Stand Firm"

Under the sub-heading, "Western nations must not shrink from the escalating threats of terrorism," the right-of-center Calgary Herald observed (8/25): "Middle East developments have led all parties to a critical confluence, which future historians will judge to be one of that blood-soaked land's pivotal moments. From western leaders, the situation demands wisdom, courage and, above all, resolution. At stake are two key pillars of U.S. Middle East policy. Failure does not mean the political status quo, but a fundamental reordering of the area, to the West's detriment. America's two regional objectives are a liberal democracy in Iraq and peace in Israel/Palestine, through the so-called road map process. Success would mean a better tomorrow for people who have never known hope. If the Americans can be forced out, however, Islamic theocracies from Iraq to Saudi Arabia are the most likely result - and even, perhaps, Israel's isolation.... The Americans cannot find Osama bin Laden. Powerful they are, but not omnipotent.... Likewise, they have deposed Saddam Hussein, but cannot find him. Nor have they brought peace to Iraq, much less the hoped-for better life.... Therefore, Iraqi nationalists have accepted aid from whomever offers. Facilitated by Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia, America-hating militants come to Iraq from all over the region, as well as Chechnya and even Bosnia.... Meanwhile in Israel, old hatreds - guided, we suspect, by those with a larger picture - have been manipulated in an attempt to demolish the second pillar of U.S. Middle East policy, a permanent peace settlement. The terrorist plan is manifest: inflame the whole region, force out the U.S. and remake the Middle East, not as a constellation of liberal democracies but as Islamic republics, nests of terrorism, a Taliban culture with Saddam's efficiency. The West cannot tolerate such an outcome. If we do not win today, we will have to fight again some other time. Fortunately, the English-speaking people can draw inspiration from their own defining moments, as when Abraham Lincoln took up the Confederate challenge or Great Britain's years standing alone against Nazi Germany. Today is another such moment, and it belongs to U.S. President George W.

Bush. We must hope he can keep the American people with him long enough to see that his vision, not the default one, becomes reality."

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